



Committee on  
**HOMELAND SECURITY**  
Chairman Michael McCaul

**Opening Statement**

September 18, 2013

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Peter T. King (R-NY)  
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence  
Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Understanding the Threat to the Homeland from AQAP”**

**September 18, 2013  
Remarks as Prepared**

At the onset of today’s hearing, I want to express sincere sympathies to the families, friends, and coworkers of the 12 victims and 8 people injured in the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard on Monday. Investigations are ongoing into both the shooter and how he was able to gain access to a sensitive military facility and I fully support those efforts.

On December 7, 2011, I held a joint hearing with Senator Lieberman on the threat to military personnel and facilities within the United States. While there is no evidence currently that the tragic events on September 16th were inspired by ideology, the reality is that our military personnel are a target and more needs to be done to address security within ranks and at facilities.

Also, this month we recognized the 12th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In the past 12 years, Islamist terrorists have carried out additional attacks, including:

- The murder of two U.S. Army soldiers at a Little Rock recruiting center on June 1, 2009;
- The murder of 13 people and injuring 42 others at a deployment center at Fort Hood on July 15, 2009; and
- The attack during the Boston Marathon killing 3 people and injuring approximately 260 people on April 15, 2013.

We have been lucky that not all of these attempts resulted in the loss of innocent lives:

- The unsuccessful detonation of an explosive device on Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009;
- The attempt to detonate a vehicle born improvised explosive device (VBIED) in Times Square on May 1, 2010;
- The discover of two bombs hidden in printer cartridges on U.S.-bound cargo planes on October 29, 2010;
- A disrupted plot to smuggle an explosive device on an airline in May 2012; and
- Numerous other plots that have been disrupted.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Yemen-based al Qaeda affiliate, has been linked to most of these either directly or indirectly through inspiring homegrown radicals.

Most recently, the U.S. Government closed 22 embassies, mainly in the Middle East and North Africa, for a week due to security concerns relating to the threat from AQAP. As a result, the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen remained closed for two weeks. The closure of any U.S. Diplomatic facility for even a day – let alone 22 – is a decision that is not made lightly. This incident should remind us all what a danger AQAP poses.

Media reports revealed that intercepted electronic conversations between AQAP emir Nasir al-Wahishi and the head of al Qaeda Ayman al-Zawahiri discussed plans for a major attack during a specific timeframe but not details on targets and locations for the attack.

While additional counterterrorism pressure seems to have disrupted the attack in the short term, the situation is a reminder that we must remain vigilant and that al Qaeda and its affiliates remain intent on carrying out an attack against U.S. interests and especially the Homeland.

In the past 12 years, under both the Bush and Obama Administrations, we have made great efforts to track down and remove senior al Qaeda leaders, including Anwar al-Awlaki, Samir Khan, and Said al Shihiri within AQAP and, of course, Osama bin Laden.

Unfortunately, in many ways, the al Qaeda network is stronger today than it was before 9/11 because it has footholds in so many locations. As the White House and Congress continue to grapple with the situation in Syria, it is vital that we do not lose sight of the threat posed by AQAP and other al Qaeda affiliates.

That is why I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses regarding the ongoing threat to the U.S. Homeland from AQAP, include an evaluation of their current intent and capability, review U.S. Counterterrorism policy towards the group, and the lessons learned from the August embassy closures.

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